

March
1999

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LUTHERAN WOMAN TODAY



FAITH'S JOURNEY

BRIEF PRAYERS ON NEWS ITEMS

Sonia C. Solomonson

Don't feel helpless when you hear news stories. Pray for the people and concerns in those stories. You might clip articles or pictures of those for whom you wish to pray and perhaps make a prayer book with the clippings.

MOVING TOWARD ECUMENISM

The St. Benedict Center near Madison, Wis., is inviting ELCA and other Protestant women to join their monastic community. Breaking new ground for Roman Catholic monasteries, the women retain their denominational traditions while becoming full, lifetime members of the Sisters of St. Benedict. ELCA member Kathleen Hurty, who serves on the board, says, "For women who wish to live this way, this is an exciting opportunity." For more information, call 608-836-1631.

Continue to open us to new avenues of service, God of all.

CALLING ALL GRANDPARENTS

The Foster Grandparent program in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area is administered by Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota. Nationally the program helps more than 80,000 children and youth with exceptional needs in hospitals, abuse shelters, and correctional institutions, and other facilities. Foster Grandparent Gwen Smith says, "These children love and trust me. It gives me so much gratification to feel that I have made a difference."

Many children need our love and care, O God. Move us to action.

HELPING OUR SISTERS

Our Sister's Place, in Brooklyn, N.Y., provides homeless women with education and training in employment skills, assistance with child care, help in finding permanent housing and jobs, and information about community resources.

Beautiful Savior, bless the work of Our Sister's Place and all ministries that empower the homeless.

LWT

Sonia C. Solomonson is a senior editor for The Lutheran.

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Editor:

Nancy J. Stelling

Managing

Editor:

Sue Edison-Swift

Associate

Editor:

Kate Sprutta Elliott

Production

Editor:

James Satter

Graphic

Designer:

Linnea J. West Wong

Secretary:

Bettelou Bruce

Guest Planners:

Catherine Braasch,
Barbara Hofmaier

Art and photos:

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On the cover:

"Faith's journey" art,
by Linnea J. West
Wong, (adapted from a
PhotoDisc, Inc. image)
features a labyrinth
to illustrate our life-
time walk with God.
Learn more about
the labyrinth, an
ancient Christian
spiritual discipline,
in the editor's note
on page 3.

**THEME ARTICLES:
LIFE'S JOURNEY**

4 Holy labor of love
David L. Miller

*A personal story of a
labor of love calls us
to the cross and to
compassion.*

**8 God and the mean-
ing of suffering**
Terence E. Fretheim

*"Why, O Lord?" we cry
when we experience or
witness suffering. Pass
on this helpful article
to someone wrestling
with faith in the midst
of suffering.*

**11 Equipped for the
journey**
Julie A. Kanarr

*A 30-mile bike ride is
a lot like life; God is
there.*

**16 Have Lutherans
been shortchanged?**
Daniel L. Bohlman

*Even a "boring" faith-
story is great.*

**18 "The Son will make
you free indeed"**
Barbara Berry-Bailey
*Indiana's faith journey
relies on the promises
of baptism, especially*

*after leaving an abusive
marriage.*

**20 Bridget: "Daughter"
of St. Patrick**
Catherine I. H. Braasch
*Listen as Bridget talks
about faith's journey.*

IN DEVOTION

*** Shorttakes:**

*Brief prayers on news
items*

**33 Devotions during
Holy Week**
Nancy K. Padgett
*Six devotions encourage
us to walk with Jesus
on his journey to the
cross.*

**SECURE IN THE
PROMISE**

*A Bible study on the
book of Revelation*

**23 What is the
Pseudepigrapha?**
Gwen Saylor

**25 Session 3: Protected
by the promise**

SHARING OUR STORIES

14 Ringing in the new
Carol Kehlmeier
*Trying something new
led to a bell choir.*

(Continued on page 2)

**Women of
the ELCA
IdeaNet**

*A helpful
newsletter
found in the
middle of
LWT.*

This issue
offers tips
about
**Mother-
Daughter
Gatherings**
and carries
an important
survey about
summer
Bible
studies.

**15 Give us this day:
March with hope**
*Columnist Marj
Leegard finds hope,
even in the dreary days
of March.*

22 Out of the depths
*Jean Chapman
Johansson*

*In a difficult time,
Psalm 130 points to
God's presence.*

39 Psalm 121:
A song of praise
Angie Erickson Brady
*From youth to golden
age, Psalm 121 offers
comfort.*

WOMEN OF THE ELCA

**40 Stewards of the
vision**
*Audit and budget fig-
ures tell the story of
ministry and mission.*

**46 Speaking of
triennial convention**
*Learn about convention
keynote speakers.*

47 Official notice:
**Women of the ELCA
Fourth Triennial
Convention**

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

3 Editor's note
*Learn more of the
"Faith's Journey" theme
and about labyrinths.*

48 Underlines
*LWT: Not
just for reading
anymore. Barbara
Hofmaier offers
creative ways to
use the January /
February and March
1999 issues for
programs, retreats,
and devotions. Watch
for this column in
every other issue of
LWT.*

NEW

CAN WE TALK?

Please complete the
survey about LWT Bible
studies found in this
issue of IdeaNet.

And here's one more
question: **What do you
think of the new
format for the table
of contents?**

Please compare this
contents page with a
previous issue and let
us know if you prefer
the one-page or the two-
page format. See the
information under
"LWT Editorial Office"
on page 49 for how to
get in touch with us.

Faith's journey



"Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life"
(Revelation 2:10b, see p. 25).

Faith's journey takes us all through mountaintop experiences

and the valleys of the shadow of death. This issue of LWT comes to be present with you as you make your own journey. And presence comes in a number of ways:

- in the two lead articles on suffering that will make you catch your breath as you as you reflect on what life is all about (pp. 4, 8);
- in the equipment needed for the journey (p. 11);
- in special devotions for Holy Week by a pastor/developer (p. 33);
- in the legacy of St. Bridget, an Irish saint with a remarkable story (p. 20);
- in the rest of the articles described in LWT's newly expanded table of contents, and ...
- in the labyrinth on the front cover.

A word about labyrinths. A labyrinth is a spiral-designed foot path that offers people who walk it

an opportunity for prayer, meditation, and simply being with God. The labyrinth is an ancient symbol that the church in the Middle Ages used to help people make symbolic journeys of faith. The church today is only now rediscovering and reclaiming this special spiritual tool. The most famous labyrinth—on which many contemporary labyrinths are modeled—is imbedded in the floor of the Chartres Cathedral in France, rendered in the year 1220. Today labyrinths can be part of a church's architecture or, more commonly, are created on floor cloths, portable enough to travel to workshops and retreats.

The faithful are often encouraged to experience a labyrinth while being mindful of three stages. First, when moving from the entrance of the labyrinth toward the center, you focus on casting off the worries of the day. Then, at the center, pause for prayer and quiet, creating a time to be open to the Holy Spirit's presence. Finally, during the walk out of the labyrinth, as you retrace your steps, listen for God's voice for you, as you are mindful of the needs of others.

You may want to simulate the labyrinth experience of prayer and meditation using LWT's front cover. First quiet yourself, then follow your finger or pen through the labyrinth, keeping in mind the three stages discussed above. **LWT**

Blessed journey!

Nancy J. Stelling

Nancy J. Stelling, Editor, LWT

Holy labor of love

David L. Miller

Any true act of compassion participates in God's labor of love.

The feeling of my arms around my father's waist stays with me; the thick edge of the back brace under his shirt and the broken disjointedness of his crippled body. Once this body was vibrant and hungered for challenges. Once it knew the exhilaration of skiing down Miller's Mound and the joy of throwing me on his shoulder. But that was now more than 40 years ago.

On this day he pushes with what strength he has left, and I pull upward as I stand facing him. After a moment of struggle his leg brace snaps into place, and he stands on his own, an ability that the ravages of polio and post-polio syndrome have not yet stripped from him.

My mother hands him his crutches as she has thousands of times before, and I stand there, head down, trying to hide the tears that are spilling from my eyes and falling to the restaurant floor.

My tears might be the fruit of sorrow over what years of struggling with a diminished body have done to this man whom I love more than I have words to say. But they are not. Their source is deeper.

It is not sorrow I feel but honor and joy.

I helped him up. I am the one who is honored with the immense privilege of caring for this man named Lavern. I gave him the dignity of care that provided what he needed, then stepped aside in respect as he slowly walked away.

This is my job, a holy task my Lord has given to me. If I belonged to another family, my tasks, my labor of love, would be something else. But at that moment in the restaurant I knew beyond the shadow of a doubt how honored I was to be a son of this family, a man whose love needs to take this particular shape.

My joy was that experience of self-transcendence that belongs to every act of true compassion. Compassion

comes from two Latin words: *com* (with, together, jointly) and *pati* (to bear, to suffer). Certainly, I had borne with my father, sharing—at least for one moment—his suffering.

DEEPER LOOK

But my tears moved me to look deeper. I began to recall scenes that had been reappearing in my mind's eye as I meditated on Jesus' suffering and passion.

I meditated by reading through a Bible story; then I set the book aside and let the event come alive before the inner eye of my imagination. While meditating I saw Jesus lying on the ground in the Garden of Gethsemane, begging his heavenly Father to grant him some sense of peace and strength to face the agony that lay before him.

As I watched him, he turned to me and stretched out his hand, his fingers spread wide. "I need you," he said.

"I have nothing to give," I whispered as I reached for his hand, feeling utterly helpless.

"You have yourself," Jesus responded as I saw the scene in my mind.

"I have no way to help you," I said in grief and defeat. I looked at the ground, avoiding his eyes.

"I just want you," he insisted, and I realized he wanted nothing more than my presence so he did not have to suffer or struggle or die alone. He wanted me.

Several days later I meditated on Jesus as he carried his cross to Calvary, where he was crucified. In my mind's eye, I stepped forward and picked up his cross when, beaten and bloody, he fell beneath its weight. "My brother," he said as I stooped to pick it up, "do the labor your Lord has given you."

"What is this labor?" I asked.

"Tell them," Jesus responded.

"What should I tell them?"



"Tell them of me. Tell them that not all suffering is evil. Tell them that my suffering in love gives life to the world. Tell them they can share this suffering."

"I will," I answered softly, then picked up the cross and began carrying it up the street, sharing in his suffering.

HOLY LABOR

With these scenes percolating in the back of my mind, my surprising tears in the restaurant were not that surprising at all. They revealed a spiritual truth that was real and powerful, whether I recognized it or not: When I slipped my arms around my father's waist, I was sharing in Jesus' suffering. I was carrying out my part in God's holy labor of love to give life to the world.

The honor and joy I felt found their source not in my love, but in a love that has sought my heart since before the advent of time, a love that has hungered for me since before my father skied down Miller's Mound or threw me on his shoulder.

My tears had their source in a love that flows from secret depths of God to my arms as I held my father and to my eyes as that love flowed down my cheeks and fell to the restaurant floor.

There, I knew why Paul and the author of 1 Peter tell us to rejoice as we share in Christ's suffering (Colossians 1:24; 1 Peter 4:13). Rejoice, they seem to say, for your lives have become a holy sacrament. They are giving God's own life to the world.

They didn't need to tell me this. My own heart was enough to tell me the truth.

COMMUNITIES SUFFER

Any true act of compassion—bearing and suffering with those who struggle—participates in God's labor of love that finds its holiest expression in Christ: his working, his healing, his teaching, his forgiving, his arguing, his suffering, and his dying.

Perhaps that is why I am so moved each time I see stricken communities suffer together. As a writer, I have seen and reported on starvation and war in Africa and the Middle East. I have covered earthquakes, hurri-



canes, floods, and tornadoes—and watched how communities and congregations care for each other in the aftermath of disaster.

I've seen flood victims in North Dakota hurry from their own swamped homes and throw sandbags to protect the homes of others.

I've watched a hurricane victim in Florida receive an emergency portable generator to electrify his home, only to give it away because he heard that the guy at the back of the line had a baby at home.

I've watched Sudanese relief workers wipe away tears as they listen to the hungry wail of hundreds of people, many of whom, they know, will starve because there is no more food.

I've seen friends and neighbors hold each other, sobbing, as they sifted through the remnants of their homes after nature had smashed everything, leaving precious heirlooms and photos in a moldering mess.

I've seen an old Irish nun cradling and rocking skeletal Somali children, trying to rouse them to eat, while her helpers scoured road ditches to bring in more starving kids, left parentless and bereft by war.

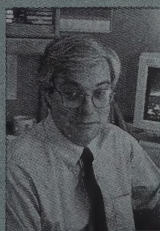
I've seen people dissolve in tears at the sight of fellow church members coming to their aid after a tragedy, reminding them that they are not forgotten.

And I know people who spend hundreds of hours and thousands of dollars of their own money to bring artificial limbs to land-mine victims in El Salvador; or safe shelter, food, and a good education to Vietnamese orphans; or letters of compassion to those who, like themselves, have buried children.

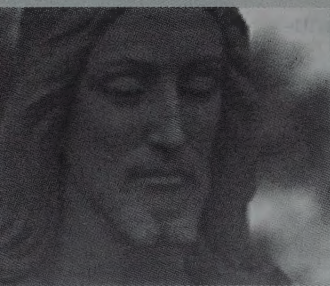
And every time I see people doing such things I want to run to them, take their face in my hands and tell them, "Do you know who are? Do you know the glorious and beautiful thing you have done? Whether you know it or not, you are the arms of God's mercy. Your life is caught up in the holy labor of love through which God gives life to the world."

I want every one of them to know the honor of their service, an honor that evokes tears that fall in the dust of Sudanese villages and on restaurant floors in Illinois, tears that unite us in one holy labor of love. **LWT**

***It is not
sorrow I
feel but
honor
and joy.***



*David L.
Miller is a
senior editor
of The
Lutheran.*



God and the meaning of suffering

Terence E. Fretheim

In your community, there is grief enough to freeze the blood. This ongoing experience of suffering has generated a variety of opinions. They include:

- All suffering is bad and to be avoided at all costs.
- All suffering is due to sin.
- All suffering is taking up the cross.
- All suffering is the will of God.

A close study of the Bible shows that none of these opinions is accurate. At the same time, it is difficult to say exactly what suffering is all about. At the least, we should think about *different kinds* of suffering. This article will explore this theme from five perspectives. No one of these perspectives, nor even all of them together, provides us with a definitive answer or explanation of suffering. But they may help bring us some insight into a reality that we will all experience at one time or another.

SUFFERING AS PART OF GOD'S GOOD CREATION

Some suffering is good and is a part of the world as God created it to be. We know from going to school that struggle and challenge are necessary for personal growth and development. In the world of sports and exercise, the phrase "no pain, no gain" rings true to us. As long as this kind of suffering contributes to life and well-being, it has a good purpose in God's creation.

Human beings are created with limits—of intelligence, agility, and strength. When we test those limits we may suffer, not because we sin but because we make mistakes. For example, when we slip or stumble we become subject to God's good law of gravity, and we may get hurt or even killed. God's good creation is not a risk-free place! Even

before they sinned, Adam or Eve could have fallen from a tree and, say, broken an arm, causing much pain. Sin could enter this picture if we stumble because, say, we are drunk or are pushed by someone.

From another angle, God has created a dynamic world, always on the move. Earthquakes, volcanoes, glaciers, and storms give ever new shape to God's good creation. Bacteria and viruses have their role to play in this "becoming" of the world. God does not micro-manage these processes or plan them in some precise way. Rather God lets these aspects of the creation work as God created them to work. While this becoming of the creation is an orderly process in some basic ways, we must also speak of chance and randomness. What object a wind-storm might pick up and where it might be blown is unpredictable. As Ecclesiastes 9:11 puts it, "time and chance happen to them all."

Because human beings are part of this interconnected world, we may get in the way of some of these processes in nature and get hurt by them. One thinks of the randomness of the gene pool, or tragic encounters with certain storms or viruses. We live in that kind of world! Sin could enter this picture if, by our actions, we pollute the environment so that storms become more severe. Or if a habit of smoking cigarettes leads to harmful encounters with certain microorganisms.

SUFFERING AS THE CONSEQUENCE OF OUR OWN SIN

We know from experience that sins can cause suffering. If a person is reckless and drives a car into a wall, there will be suffering. We sometimes use the phrase "what goes around comes around," to describe these sorts of events. But such consequences do not happen because God pulls some kind of trigger when someone sins. Rather, they occur because God has made a world in which our actions have consequences. Such consequences are not inevitable, of course; the world does not work with that kind of precision.

SUFFERING AS THE CONSEQUENCE OF THE SINS OF OTHER PEOPLE

We often experience suffering, not because of something we have done, but because of what others have done to us. When the Israelites were in bondage in Egypt, they were suffering because of the sins of the *Egyptians*.

Their suffering was obviously not the will of God for them; rather, God moved to get them out of the situation (Exodus 3:7-10). "Salvation" (Exodus 15:2) was God taking them out of the oppressive situation. We must remember that Jesus died, not just to save us from our sins, but to heal us from our hurt and from other ill effects of the sins of others.

SUFFERING AS PART OF BELONGING TO FALLEN COMMUNITIES

We also suffer because we belong to various communities that have had a long history of sinfulness and evil. Sin has become so pervasive that it takes on a life of its own and becomes a part of the very structures of our life together (family, town, nation, even congregations). Words such as ageism, racism, and sexism refer to this reality. We will be caught up in these effects on our communities, and we will make our own contribution to the suffering that coming generations experience.

SUFFERING AS A VOCATION

Suffering is sometimes associated with the vocation to which God calls us. Listen to 1 Peter 2:21, "For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps." Suffering may come to us when we take up God's call to enter into the suffering of other people and make it our own. This is suffering that we could avoid. This is the only type of suffering that can be considered "taking up the cross" (Mark 8:34), and it can clearly be called God's will for our lives for the sake of our neighbor (see Isaiah 53:10).

FOR FURTHER READING

*A helpful
resource is
Douglas John
Hall's book
God and
Human
Suffering
(Augsburg,
1986).*

In considering these matters, we should remember that suffering is no stranger to God. God does not remain aloof toward our suffering or relate to us as a mechanic relates to a "sick" car, seeking to fix us from the outside. Rather, God has chosen to get inside our world and, like good and powerful medicine, heal it from within. The God of Israel who truly "knows our suffering" (Exodus 3:7) has entered deeply into our suffering world in Jesus Christ and made it his own. When sufferings do come our way—and come they will—this God whom we know in Jesus will hold us in his hands and never, ever, let us go. **WWT**

Terence E. Fretheim is professor of Old Testament at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn. He is the author of The Suffering of God (Fortress Press, 1984).

Equipped for the journey

Julie A. Kanarr



It was 9:40 a.m. when I rolled into the church parking lot and leaned my bicycle against the building near the front door. This Sunday was the eighth day of a three-week solo journey around southern Montana. It had been a 30-mile ride from my campsite to the closest Lutheran church, and I was pleased that I'd arrived with enough time to change clothes and drink coffee before worship.

Barely had I removed my helmet, gloves, and sunglasses when a man from the congregation approached me. Eyeing my touring bike, laden with gear, he asked if I had room

for something more. "Yes," I said without hesitation, hoping that whatever he was offering was either edible or lightweight. I had packed my gear carefully, vigilant to take only what was necessary. I hated the idea of hauling anything extra when I was the engine propelling this rig over the seven mountain passes that lay on my route.

The man walked to his car and returned with a little wooden plaque that said, "Jesus," which he presented to me with a word of blessing for my journey. Thanking him, I found a spot for it with my gear. I carried that plaque with me for the rest of the trip as a tangible reminder not only of Christ's presence, but of our shared faith that brings us into a common community through Christ. That plaque joined my collection of essential equipment for the journey.

I only need to climb one hill at a time.

Most of the people whom I met along the way asked me the same three questions: The first was about the gear I carried. I would describe what lay hidden inside the bags attached to the racks over each wheel. I hauled along just enough equipment to be self-sufficient and safe, as well as enough food and water to sustain me until the next town, which in Montana might be 50 miles up the road.

Then they would ask how I managed to climb the hills. Recalling the long uphill rides at 5 mph, I'd say, "slowly," and add, "but I only need to climb one hill at a time."

Finally, they'd ask if I was traveling alone. Remembering both the little plaque stashed in my

bag, and the hospitality offered by my brothers and sisters in Christ along the way, I'd reply, "not really." Although I traveled solo and self-contained, I was most definitely not alone on this journey.

Our whole life of faith is a journey. Sometimes that journey is easy, beckoning us like a smooth road. At other times that journey is challenging, pushing us to our limits. Whether it be grief or doubt, or a major tragedy, or a series of minor problems that pile up until they threaten to overwhelm you, you may feel like you are climbing a hill that has no end. You may find yourself wondering whether you have the stamina to keep going, either physically or spiritually. You may find yourself doubting whether you are really equipped to handle this journey, and you may feel tempted to quit.

Modern Christians are not the first to face such difficulties. The Christians whom the author of Revelation addresses also lived under trying circumstances. They faced the challenge of attempting to live faithfully in the midst of a hostile and indifferent world that didn't understand them or their commitment to Jesus. Revelation's author offered them words of encouragement to sustain them on their journey. He reminded them that



The photos on pages 11 and 12 were taken by the author on her bicycle journey.

they were not alone, either in their struggles or in their faith. When their journey led them up a steep, seemingly endless hill, he encouraged them with words of promise about what lay on the other side. With vivid verbal pictures, he described God's ultimate triumph over suffering, giving them hope for their future.

Revelation's message is: "Yes, the road you travel now is difficult, but it won't always be like this." The promise of what lay "over the hill" equipped them for their journey with both spiritual strength and mental stamina.

When our life's journey leads us through difficult times and its own set of mental and spiritual challenges, we also can rely on the promise of faith. The words of Scripture offer us encouragement and hope. When we lift up our eyes to see nothing but a hill and wonder how we are going to climb it, we can be assured that our help will come from God (see Psalm 121). The journey may be slow and arduous, but the promise is sure. We can rely on God's promise for our future: That even though the journey now may be difficult, it won't always be, for God has promised to "wipe every tear from (our) eyes" (Revelation 21:4).

That promise frees us from worrying about the future. The journey of faith involves both thinking about the "big picture" and worrying only about today's troubles. Sometimes we need to concentrate on one, and sometimes on the other. We live in hope and anticipation of the promised future that lies ahead. And yet, because the future is in God's hands, we can confidently follow Jesus' counsel to "let the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day." (Matthew 6:34, Revised Standard Version). We only need to climb one hill at a time, trusting that God will see us through all those difficult moments (and other hills) that are yet to come. That promise equips us with both spiritual strength and mental stamina.

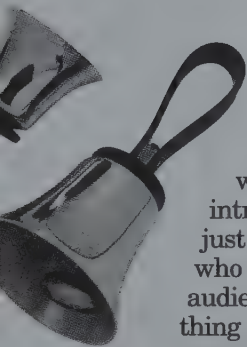
Ultimately, we travel faith's road not with a little wooden "Jesus" plaque tucked away in our bag, but with the promise of the living Christ's unfailing presence with us, even when we thought we were alone. Ours is not a solo journey. We are sustained by the presence and promise of God. All who believe this are well equipped for the journey. **AWT**



Julie A. Kanarr is pastor at Shields River Lutheran in Wilsall, Mont., and Redeemer Lutheran in Livingston, Mont. She is an avid cyclist and backpacker.

Ring in the new

Carol Kehlmeier



The announcement at church that a handbell choir was being formed intrigued me. I had just heard a speaker who encouraged the audience to “try something new.” Handbells seemed doable. But they did call for reading music—and that was something I knew nothing about.

The director assured the few of us that gathered, “All you have to know is how to count to four.”

I’ve never been good at math, but I could count to four. So I joined the musical group thinking all I had to know was how to count. Wrong!

There are different kinds of notes, this musical illiterate learned. There are things called “triples,” symbols for loud and soft, fast and slow, rests—and lots of Italian words!

There are funny little wiggly lines and arrows and letters (none of which I knew anything about) on the sheet music—sheet music I was told I wouldn’t have to know how to read!

But there was something else in the handbell choir. There were lots

of other women, young and not so young. Some were musically illiterate like me and some were talented and knowledgeable. Those who knew what the wiggly lines meant helped those of us who didn’t.

In working together to praise God, I developed new friendships. I met people in our congregation I would not have known otherwise. And I had taken on a new challenge!

Oh, I made mistakes. When I took up the wrong bell, “Amazing Grace” sounded amazingly wrong. The director told us, “Watch me! Look at your music! Soul! Put some soul into it!”

Watch her? Look at the music? Soul? No one told me about soul.

We were playing to praise the Lord. I wanted to be perfect. I wasn’t perfect. I wasn’t ever going to be perfect. I decided to tell the director she had to find someone else to take my place.

But then something happened. One day at rehearsal things seemed to be going rather nicely. We were having fun!

“That’s what I mean! Soul! You’re finding your soul!” the director called happily.

I thought about the friendships made with the other bell ringers ... and I decided to stay in the choir.

I am wondering now what new challenge I should try next. **LWT**

Carol Kehlmeier is a writer and a member of St. Paul Lutheran in Westerville, Ohio.



March with hope

Marj Leegard

March is a dreary month. The winds and snowdrifts of winter have not even *thought* of leaving in this north country. Months have passed since the excitement of the first snowfall. Little wonder that the snow is weary and worn and honeycombed with gray. There is no hint of spring, only a dream of what has always come—and will surely come this year again.

Dreams. March winds. Prevailing gray. There are no huge and devastating sorrows to draw my neighbors near with hugs and casseroles. But, then, I don't want to be comforted, thank you.

If I am tired of March already—and it has only just arrived—then all those around me must be made miserable. My husband, the cat, and the dog are in misery—for misery loves company, and then drives the company away.

I remember a spicy, good meal my sister cooked. Southwestern foods. Tacos and burritos and enchiladas and black beans. The dinner party was so many years ago that most of us had never tasted such exotic fare before.

Uncle Anton studied the array carefully, then put a small portion of each on his plate and retreated to the table in the family room where the other men were seated. Uncle Anton was accustomed to home-made bread with jelly, plain roast with mashed potatoes and gravy, and apple pie. This was a whole new experience. He had learned early to be polite and so ate what was offered. It took more than the usual amount of coffee to wipe out the taste of jalapenos. When Uncle Anton had finished, he turned to my husband and said very quietly, "This is the worst meal I ever ate!"

The rest of us were intrigued by the new tastes and followed my sister Betty's lead into new food ideas. That is what I need now—a new-mood idea! This end-of-winter that tenaciously hangs on is not "the worst meal I ever ate." I have been where real sorrow and rebellion live. That place is in the story in Genesis of Abraham's willingness to obey God even if it meant the death of his son, Isaac. It is hard to understand, harder to emulate.

One Sunday my pastor preached about "the test" Abraham passed. Tears were still flowing when I reached the door to shake hands and I said, "I have failed the test." When we walked in the door at home, the phone was ringing. It was

our pastor on his car phone. He said simply, "Marj, the semester isn't over yet."

There is hope! Then I remembered something that fills me with hope:

"The Lord's kindness never fails! The Lord can always be trusted to show mercy each morning. Deep in my heart I say, 'The Lord is all I need; I can depend on him!'"
(Lamentations 3:22-24, Contemporary English Version).



We can *March* into the end of winter together with hope. Burritos for supper anyone? **LWT**

LWT columnist Marj Leegard is a member of Bakke-Lund-Richwood parish in Detroit Lakes, Minn.

Have Lutherans been short-changed?

Daniel L. Bohlman

Most of us at one time or another have been approached by someone asking, "Have you been born again?" It happened to me late one evening after I sold a pair of shoes. While putting the shoes back into the box, out of the blue a customer asked me if I had been born again. My answer to her was a simple "yes." I was hoping that that would end the conversation, but it didn't.

When she asked me to tell her about this great event, I was honest with her and told her I didn't remember it because it happened at my baptism when I was an infant.

Infant baptism meant nothing to this woman, as I came to find out by her next question: "But were you *reborn*?" (emphasis hers). And with that question came her complete review of the third chapter of John and the story of Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus.

I had heard it before, it was late, and I was tired. So I didn't say another word and led the customer up to the register. However, this woman, unaffected by the change of



location, leaned forward and whispered out her entire story of rebirth.

The experience this woman had was beautiful. And I have no doubt that it did, in fact, change her entire life. I told her so, and I also told her that she would have to leave because I had to close the store.

That night, I couldn't get this incident out of my mind. I thought of the woman's story and started to wonder if all of us "reborn as infants" Lutherans haven't been shortchanged by God of some great experience. Since I don't remember my baptism day, my "reborn" experience couldn't stack up to hers. I concluded that I was one boring Christian, who had been, for reasons unknown, deprived of some mountaintop experience with God.

Shortly after that encounter, I read in Deuteronomy 11 what Moses said to all Israel: "You shall put these words of mine in your heart and soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and fix them as an emblem on your forehead. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise" (11:18-19). And there is my answer to the issue of a dramatic born-again experience.

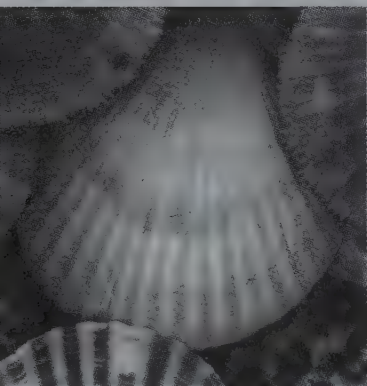
See, I have been blessed with a mother and father, grandparents, and a church family who nurtured me in the faith all my life. My family and church brought me up in the baptismal covenant that God made with me. And they did such a good job of it that I needed no big dramatic reborn experience to know I am God's child! While some people are brought to the knowledge that God loves them in a single life-changing experience, I was blessed never to have to experience that because my parents and church never let me forget it!

So I have no "reborn" experience to share with you in the sense that I came to know the Lord on May 22, 1960. But I do have a great story of faith to tell people: It's about a family and a church that very successfully passed down the gift of God's love from one generation to the next. **LWT**

Daniel L. Bohlman is pastor of Apple Grove and Yellowstone Lutheran churches in Argyle, Wis.

“The Son will make you free indeed”

Barbara Berry-Bailey



I have a true story to tell you, as it was told to me by a woman called Indiana. She is a baptized member of a Lutheran congregation.*

“Something started to go wrong. My husband was never a religious person. I thought if I presented a model of faithful church participation, he would get involved as well. But it didn’t work out that way. He had always had a temper, but after the first year of our marriage he began to bring his anger home from bad days at work. We were college-educated people. We had great careers, a neat kid—I just don’t know what happened.”

As Indiana sits with tears in her eyes, I ask if she wants to go on. She nods and the tears fall.

“He used to be a boxer in high school, so he knew how and where to hit. And days later he would apologize, crying and vowing never to do it again. He didn’t drink alcohol or use drugs. He said he couldn’t control his anger in the heat of an argument. But you know, he never hit anyone at work.

“Finally I couldn’t take it anymore. I found an apartment across town and told him I was going to move out and take our son with me. He collapsed into tears; I felt nothing. ‘This too shall pass,’ I remember thinking. I felt like Pharaoh: my heart had been hardened.

“One Sunday as I entered church, I saw my husband sitting with my aunt and uncle. They were sponsoring him for baptism and therefore, membership. NOW he joins the church. Go figure! All of his relatives came to see his baptism, and during communion the families of all those who were baptized came up to commune together.

**Her real name is not used here.*

I remained in my seat. Our son asked if he could 'go up and stand with Daddy.'

"Of course you can," I told him. And as he crossed the aisle and went forward it was even more obvious that I had a hard heart. But only the Lord knew what I had been through. Those carefully placed punches always landed in a place where no one would ever see a bruise. I never called the police or told a living soul. I was too embarrassed.

"Well the pastor had just about had enough of my 'antics,' he said, and demanded that I subject myself to the authority of the church and come to his office for marital counseling. When I informed him that I had already filed for divorce, he renamed it "divorce counseling."

"And so there we were, sitting across from each other, the man who beat me, the pastor, and I. 'What goals shall we set?' the pastor asked very pleasantly. 'None,' I answered. "I have no intention of living with this man again."

The pastor became angry and began quoting scriptures to Indiana. He informed her that another woman in the congregation was enduring beatings to

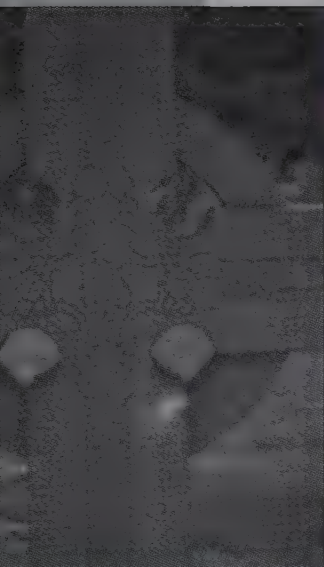
keep her marriage intact. Then he charged, "If you divorce your husband you become an adulteress."

Indiana replied, "Then that's what I'll have to be because you can't make me believe that God wants me to continually get kicked. That's not the God this church taught me about."

"I never returned to that congregation again. But I did not leave the church because God is rich in mercy. And through the Holy Spirit, God gives us the wisdom to know that even though we are sinners, through our faith in Christ Jesus we are also saints. Jesus died for me, too. And that is why I think it is so important for people to really understand what they are saying when they say that they believe in the forgiveness of sins. They say, 'We believe in one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins' on Sunday during the Creed, but somehow they have not taken these words into their hearts. They are still punishing themselves for something they should have given over to Jesus a long time ago.

"I took a lot of physical and psychological abuse because I didn't want to be divorced. But now I realize that through my baptism into Christ, I am free indeed." **LAW**

Barbara Berry-Bailey is pastor of Trinity Lutheran in historic Germantown, a part of Philadelphia.



Bridget

“Daughter” of St. Patrick

Catherine I. H. Braasch

March 17 commemorates St. Patrick, missionary bishop and the first patron saint of Ireland. Because March is also Women's History Month, walk back in time with me and meet Bridget, a spiritual daughter of Patrick. Bridget is sometimes called the second patron saint of Ireland.

Named for the sun goddess of the ancient Celtic religion, Bridget, a nun, walked the missionary road until her death in the year 523, at a time when Ireland's traditional religion was giving way to Christianity. Listen as Bridget talks of

faith's journey for Patrick and herself:

“Ah, that Patrick! Irish pirates captured him in Roman Britain when he was just a pampered, privileged young man. He was sold into slavery, made to herd sheep for six years. Out alone in those hills, Patrick remembered the prayers he learned as a boy. Prayer became precious to him! In prayer, our Lord led Patrick to escape, to make his way back to Britain, to become a priest, and of all things, to come back to Ireland as a missionary. And so I, Bridget, learned of Christ and was baptized.

“Some would say I was enslaved as a child, but others would say I was simply the daughter of a wealthy tyrant. Father or slave master, he wanted to sell me to the King of Leinster. Why? Because Christ had changed me! I kept giving away all my father's goods—to beggars, no less!

“My master, my father, left his sword untended in order to go before the king and offer me up. So, I took that sword and gave it to beggars who needed protection more than a mighty man did. When my father saw what I had done, he began to beat me mercilessly. The king saw this and asked why I would steal my father's property and give it to beggars. With freedom gone and nothing to lose, I answered, ‘If I had the power, I would steal all your royal wealth and give it to Christian brothers and sisters!’

"The king then politely declined my father's offer, saying I was too good for him. And my father let me go, too, rather than to let me drive him into poverty by giving all he had to the poor."

Bridget's faith—strong enough to steal a tyrant's sword, to unnerve a king, and to empower the powerless—gave her great authority. She later became the high abbess of Kildare, one of the powerful emerging monastic states of Ireland. As abbess, Bridget was known for her teaching, her wise and practical governance, and the hospitality of her house.

Early historians called Bridget's Kildare "the head of almost all the Irish churches ... surpassing all the monasteries of the Irish." Depending upon the sources you read, Bridget was either a bishop in fact, or a bishop in everything but name. She was among the high abbesses of early Irish Christianity who held great spiritual and secular authority over women and men alike. Even some bishops reported to these abbesses or shared leadership with them. These women almost certainly heard confessions, probably ordained clergy, and may even have celebrated Mass. Their isolation from Rome and their influence on the institutions of the Irish church put a feminine face on the otherwise patriarchal religion of Patrick and his church peers.

Even today, Bridget stands second only to Patrick among the saints of Ireland. Today, Bridget's daughters give bold witness to the name of Jesus and gracious hospitality in ways that work for their times and places. The prayer in their homes could be this table prayer of St. Bridget:

"I should like a great lake of finest ale for the King of Kings. I should like a table of the choicest food for the family of heaven. Let the ale be made from the fruits of faith, and let the food be forgiving love.

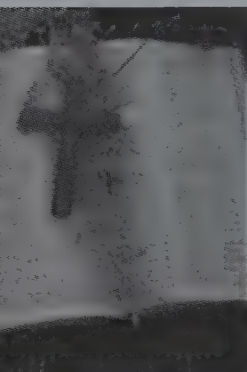
"I should welcome the poor to my feast, for they are God's children. I should welcome the sick to my feast, for they are God's joy. Let the poor sit with Jesus at the highest place and the sick dance with the angels. God bless the poor; God bless the sick. God bless our human race.

"God bless our food, God bless our drink. All homes, O God, embrace." Amen. [LWT]

Catherine I. H. Braasch, executive director of Women of the ELCA, first shared this story at the Lutheran Center chapel's weekly worship on St. Patrick's Day 1998. This is an abridged version of that message, which draws on several historical and traditional versions of Bridget's life and ministry.

Out of the depths

Jean Chapman Johansson



The words were in my head when I awoke that Sunday morning. "Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord! Lord, hear my voice!" I wasn't surprised to awake to those words, for I was going through

a sorrowful time and had, indeed, been praying to God from the very depths of my being. The temporary hearing in my divorce case had been held just four days before, and I was waiting. I was waiting to hear the decision of the judge as to whether my husband or I would have temporary custody of our 15-year-old son and temporary possession of the house where we had lived throughout our 21-year marriage.

The years leading up to the day when I filed for divorce were painful ones. Five years earlier my husband announced that he was no longer interested in our marriage. I grieved for the loss of love and companionship and family togetherness. I held on, hoping for the reconciliation that was not to be. For a long time

I pretended to others that everything was all right, when everything was actually all wrong. Gradually, tentatively, I let others into my pain.

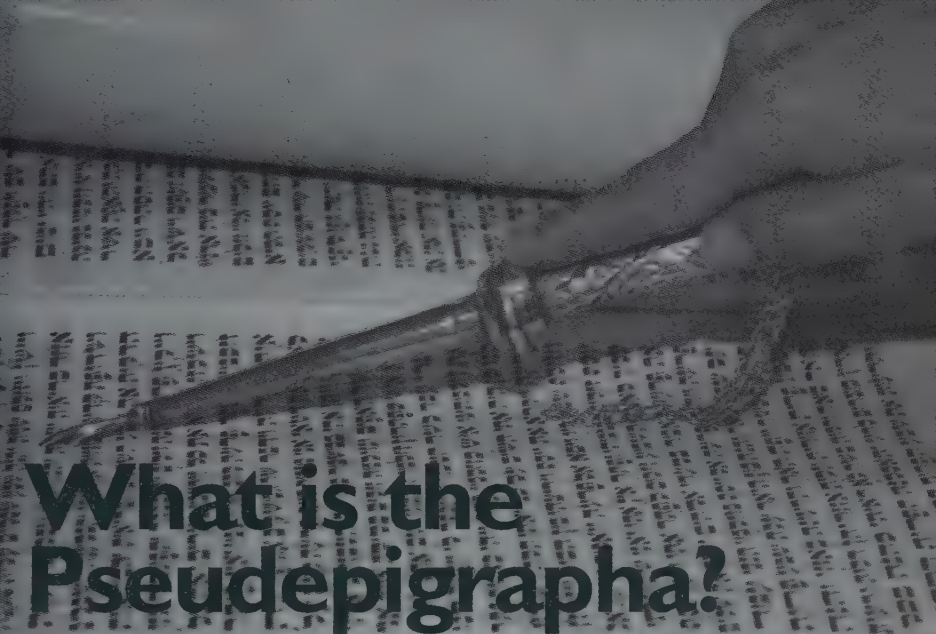
The paradox was that this stressful, painful chapter of my life had also been a gift. My faith and prayer life were transformed. Friendships took on a new dimension, as my stories brought forth others' stories, and relationships took on new depth. I came to appreciate in a new way the call to share the burdens of others.

I knew that the words I awoke to that Sunday morning were from a psalm, but I couldn't remember which one. Before going to church, I unsuccessfully tried to look it up in a concordance. I decided to ask my pastor about it after worship.

Before worship that Sunday, I paged through the hymnbook, as I often do, to see what hymns we would be singing that morning. My eyes opened wide as they fell on the title of the hymn of the day—"Out of the Depths I Cry to You," based on Psalm 130.

And I knew that God was with me. I was filled with the certainty that whatever lay ahead, God really was "attentive to the voice of my supplications," and would give me the strength, courage, and faith that I needed to carry on. Thanks be to God. **LWT**

Jean Chapman Johansson, Minneapolis, Minn., is the office manager for Metro Lutheran, a monthly pan-Lutheran newspaper serving the Twin Cities area.



What is the Pseudepigrapha?

Gwen Sayler

My friend Judy savors long, complicated words. There's a very long "Judy word" in this month's Bible study session—the word "Pseudepigrapha" (sōō'də-pig'refə). Because this word gives us so much to savor as we try to understand the imagery of Revelation, it's helpful to explain what it means.

The Pseudepigrapha are a collection of approximately 65 documents written primarily by Jews during the three centuries directly before Jesus' birth and the first two centuries after his death. Together with another collection called the "Apocrypha," the Pseudepigrapha give us valuable information about Jewish biblical interpretation during the "inter-testamental period"—the several centuries between the completion of most of the Old Testament and the writing of the New Testament.

The word "Pseudepigrapha" comes from Greek words meaning "false" and "writing." This description of the documents is unfortunate, because they are not "false." Following an honored ancient practice, authors of many pseudepigraphic writings identified the composer of their work as a hero of old (such as Moses or Enoch) rather than as themselves. Although this practice seemed "false" to the scholars who named the collection of these writings, it was seen as a sign of respect by the authors and by their original audiences.

Most pseudepigraphic writings are interpretations or expansions of selected Old Testament texts. Usually written in times of crisis, they creatively recast Old Testament stories and themes to address new situations, a process that continues in the New Testament. Later reinterpretations of Old Testament stories and themes tend to depend on earlier recastings of those stories and themes. Understanding how selected Old Testament stories and themes have been recast in pseudepigraphic writings is an important key to understanding how they are reinterpreted to proclaim the meaning of Jesus' life and mission.

Many pseudepigraphic writings are apocalyptic in nature. Their recasting of the apocalyptic traditions of Daniel 7-12 provides essential clues to understanding the complex imagery of Revelation. Like Revelation, apocalyptic pseudepigraphic writings use future-oriented visions to interpret contemporary events and call the faithful to action. In addition to apocalyptic writings, the Pseudepigrapha include a number of testaments ("last words" of biblical patriarchs), expansions of Old Testament stories, wisdom and philosophical writings, prayers, psalms, poems, and other kinds of writings as well.

Perhaps you are wondering about the relationship of the Pseudepigrapha to the Apocrypha. Basically, both are collections of similar kinds of writings. For complex reasons, the 16 documents of the Apocrypha are considered authoritative Scripture by Roman Catholics, but not by Protestants.

They are included in a number of English translations of the Bible. For equally complex reasons, the Pseudepigrapha are not considered authoritative by Roman Catholic or Protestant communities. But still they provide valuable insights into the ongoing process of proclaiming the old, old story anew for different generations of believers.

Even though we may not savor the word itself, we can't help but savor the feast that pseudepigraphic writings offer us—the power of the Holy Spirit to keep recasting biblical stories and themes to speak to us in ways we never may have imagined before. Understanding a little bit about the Pseudepigrapha deepens our awareness of what is involved in Revelation's claim that indeed we can live secure in the promise. **LWT**

Gwen Saylor, the author of the Secure in the Promise Bible study, is associate professor of Hebrew Bible at Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa.

TO LEARN MORE ...

If you would like to learn more about the Pseudepigrapha, you will find the following book helpful: *Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah*, by George Nickelsburg (Fortress Press, 1981). The pseudepigraphic writings are located in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, James Charlesworth, ed. Volumes 1 and 2 (Doubleday, 1983).

IdeaNet

March 1999 • Vol. 2, Number 6

For Mission Together

Mother-Daughter Gatherings

PostCard Ideas

Welcome all daughters

We called our event "Daughters of All Ages," which includes all females, young and old. No one is eliminated—we are all daughters!

*Delores Justman
Trinity Lutheran
Unity, Wis.*

Several years ago our church women realized that not all women had daughters, so we began to call the mother-daughter event the daughter-daughter event.

*Marge Spawn
Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran
Fort Collins, Colo.*

Grandma's attic

We invited an antique dealer to our event, and we encouraged each guest to bring an antique from home. The dealer identified each piece and told its approximate worth. She also brought antiques to display, especially toys that the children could hold and appreciate. It was an evening of memories and a chance to learn about cherished possessions.

*Gail Wolf
St. John Lutheran
Elkhorn, Wis.*

"Blossoms and Buds"

Years ago we renamed our mother-daughter salad supper "Blossoms and Buds" so more women would feel included. Several small boys attended, and since then we have counted them among our "buds" at each event. One year we held a fashion show of homemade and purchased clothing and afterward gave the clothing to an overseas ministry. Each year we honor a Woman of the Year, someone outstanding in her service to God. Her name is engraved on a brass plate on a plaque in our narthex.

*Carol Whitcomb
Our Savior's Lutheran
Stillwater, Minn.*

Thrift-store fashion show

The women of St. John Lutheran held a style show. All clothes worn by the models were purchased at the local thrift store. Dressy and casual outfits, nighttime wear, clothing suitable for gardening—we had great variety. The event was very enjoyable for all ages!

*Shirley Jelken
St. John Lutheran
Le Mars, Iowa*

High tea

We hosted a high tea and asked that everyone wear a hat and gloves. We promoted the event for several Sundays in advance by having hats (many borrowed from our community theater) in the narthex for women to try on and borrow. We had a wonderful turnout. The little girls especially loved dressing up in hats and gloves. Entertainment included a hat contest, a silent-movie-style skit, an Easter-bonnet parade, and of course, tea and sweets.

Edye Ray

Trinity Lutheran

Stevens Point, Wis.

Bridal fashion show

One of our most successful intergenerational events was a bridal fashion show. About 20 dresses from the 1880s to the 1990s were modeled by mothers, daughters, granddaughters, and friends. Daughters enjoyed seeing their mothers and

grandmothers in their wedding dresses. We also displayed many wedding dresses and accessories too fragile to be modeled.

Men of the congregation served brunch, and several young people provided music. Afterward everyone lined up for wedding pictures. All agreed that the show was a fun way for generations to spend a morning together. It stimulated many family conversations.

Barb Becker

Faith Lutheran

Coon Rapids, Minn.

CAUTION

In the October 1998 *IdeaNet*, we printed the suggestion that pill bottles could be recycled and used to store herbs. Another reader later sent an important caution. According to her pharmacist, **pill bottles should never be reused to store anything edible**. Even a carefully washed container could contain traces of a substance that someone could be allergic to.

Coming Up in IdeaNet

July/August 1999: Potlucks.

How do you organize potlucks? Share a story, idea, or one recipe for your favorite dish to bring. (Due March 1, 1999)

September 1999: Meeting

Ideas. Share your ideas on holding efficient meetings. How do you deal with difficult people and issues? How much business is enough? (Due April 5, 1999)

Send all
**PostCard
Ideas**
to

Women of the ELCA IdeaNet
8765 W. Higgins Rd.
Chicago, IL 60631-4189
Email: IdeaNet@elca.org

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LWT Bible Study Survey

Please help *Lutheran Woman Today* by filling out this survey and returning it by **April 15, 1999**. Mail the survey to LWT Survey, Women of the ELCA, 8765 W. Higgins Rd., Chicago, IL 60631-4189. Fax: 773-380-2419. One response per survey, please. Photocopies are acceptable. Thanks!

1. Check the statement that best describes you.

- ☐ I most often do the Bible study in *Lutheran Woman Today* (LWT) in a group, such as a circle.
- ☐ I most often do the Bible study in LWT on my own, not as part of a group.
- ☐ I rarely, or never, do the Bible study in LWT. Please skip to question 6.

2. How often do you lead an LWT Bible study session?

- ☐ Never ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Rarely ☐ Often

3. Check those resources that you regularly or occasionally use during the course of an LWT Bible study, and indicate how important these resources are to you.

	How important to you?		
	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important
<input type="checkbox"/> Bible study Resource Book	1	2	3
<input type="checkbox"/> Bible study Leader Guide	1	2	3
<input type="checkbox"/> Bible study Companion Bible	1	2	3
<input type="checkbox"/> Bible study introduction video	1	2	3
<input type="checkbox"/> Bible study devotional audiotape	1	2	3
<input type="checkbox"/> Related articles in LWT	1	2	3

4. Which is the most important factor in your decision whether or not to purchase a Bible study Resource Book or Leader Guide?

Check one.

- ☐ Cost
- ☐ Content
- ☐ Other

5. How likely would you be to subscribe to LWT if it did not include a Bible study?

- Very likely Likely Not likely
- 1 2 3

Please continue on next page.

6. Does your circle or women's group meet for Bible study in the summer months?
- ☐ Yes.
 - ☐ No.
 - ☐ I don't know.
7. LWT is planning two- or three-session Bible studies to appear in the summer issues of the magazine. Topics of upcoming summer studies may include **justice, rest and renewal**, and **healing and care-giving**. *Of the following, please check all that apply.*
- ☐ I think that people who do not do the nine-session study in LWT would be interested in participating in a three-session study on one or more of the topics listed above.
 - ☐ I am not likely to participate in these Bible studies. *Please skip to question 9.*
 - ☐ I am likely to participate in one or more summer studies with my regular Bible study group.
 - ☐ I am likely to participate in one or more summer studies with a group that comes together only occasionally, or not usually for Bible study.
 - ☐ I am likely to do these studies on my own.
 - ☐ I am likely to do these two-or three-session studies at some time other than the summer months.
8. If you are likely to participate in one or more of the **summer Bible studies in LWT**, please give us feedback on the leader helps for these two- or three-session studies. *Check all that apply.*
- ☐ It is important to me that a Leader Guide be available in a form **separate from the magazine**.
 - ☐ It is acceptable to me to have a Leader Guide **included in LWT**, along with the Bible study session.
 - ☐ I would purchase a Leader Guide for a summer study.
9. I use the Internet (World Wide Web)
- ☐ regularly.
 - ☐ on occasion.
 - ☐ never.
10. I would be able to get information off the Internet from a computer (*check all that apply*)
- ☐ at my home.
 - ☐ at my office.
 - ☐ at my church.
 - ☐ at my local library.
 - ☐ belonging to a friend or family member.
 - ☐ I do not have Internet access.
 - ☐ I don't know.

Secure in the Promise

A Study of Revelation

Gwen Sayler

SESSION 3

Protected by the promise

Revelation 8:6–12:17

STUDY TEXT

Revelation 10:1-11; 11:3-13; 12:1-6

PROMISE VERSE

Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.
(Revelation 2:10b)

OVERVIEW

The visions of Revelation 8:6—12:17 promise Christians divine protection in persecution. Protected by this promise, Christians are exhorted to remain steadfast in their resistance to Roman religion and ways.


OPENING

Give us grace, protecting God, to stand fast against evil in our lives and in our world. Amen.

WAKE-UP CALL

The visions of Revelation 8:6—12:17 continue to deal with the meaning of suffering.

- Why do faithful Christians suffer so much and sometimes suffer untimely deaths?
- What does God's promise mean in times of incredible suffering and death?



These questions are familiar to many of us. We ask them in hospital rooms and battered women's shelters, and while drinking coffee with a neighbor. They will guide us as we reflect on the implications of Revelation 8:6—12:17 for our lives.

1. Have you ever wondered why someone you loved or knew had to suffer so much? What questions would you have liked to ask God at that time?

As noted previously, Revelation is a dramatic writing meant to be heard and experienced. We have reached the point in the book where the pace and intensity of the visions increase so rapidly that the disparate images racing past us can become overwhelming. To ease our way through the material, we will treat the remainder of Revelation as a dramatic play. As you work your way through the visions, imagine that you are at a theater viewing a play on the stage in front of you. The rise and fall of the curtain marks transitions between acts and scenes of the play.

ACT I PLAGUES ON EARTH (8:6—9:21)

Scene 1 The First Four Trumpet Blasts (8:6-13)

As the curtain slowly rises, angels holding trumpets hover above the stage. One by one, four trumpets are sounded. With each trumpet blast, horror and devastation escalate. Modeled after the plagues against Egypt (Exodus 7:14—11:10, 12:29-32), the plagues unleashed by the trumpet blasts decimate one-third of the earth, sea, and inland waters. They also darken one-third of the light of the sun, moon, and stars.

The sight is overwhelming. Viewers receive a temporary respite as the curtain slowly falls. Yet there is no peace. An eagle flying through the air proclaims a chilling message: The worst is yet to come (8:13).

Scene 2 The fifth and sixth trumpet blasts (9:1-21)

When the curtain rises, the fifth angel blows his trumpet, and the horror increases. Monstrous locusts stream forth from the

bottomless pit under the stage to torment for five months all those lacking the seal of God on their foreheads (9:1-11).

Then, the blast of the sixth trumpet brings wild horse-monsters racing across the stage (9:13-19). Equipped with mouths spewing fire, smoke, and sulfur, and with vicious tails, these horse-monsters kill one-third of humankind.

One might think that the two-thirds of humankind that survive the plagues would be motivated to turn to God. Such is not the case in this vision. Stubbornly, they refuse to repent of their idolatry, murder, sorceries, fornication, and theft (9:20-21). The curtain descends on them as they rush to and fro, frantically engaging in these vile activities.


2. The practice of using horrific images to warn of forthcoming disaster is not unique to Revelation. Today such images often are part of efforts to warn people about the dangers of nuclear war, wasteful ecological practices, or controversial innovations like cloning. Can you think of any movies, posters, or television shows that use horrific images to warn of coming disaster?

ACT 2 PROTECTION FOR CHRISTIANS (10:1—12:17)

Scene 1 John recommissioned for his task (10:1-11)

As the curtain rises, viewers expecting the seventh trumpet blast are surprised by the scene before them. The stage area is totally quiet. It also is empty, except for John and an angel holding a little open scroll. Unlike the earlier sealed scroll, this one is ready to be read and acted upon by John.

3. Read Revelation 10:1-11. How is the angel described? What does he tell John to do?



Momentarily, the stage goes dark. When light returns, John stands alone with a measuring rod.

Scene 2 Measuring the Temple (11:1-2)

As commanded, John proceeds to measure the temple (11:1-2). This is not the temple in Jerusalem that was destroyed decades earlier. Rather, it most likely represents the Christian communities, while the unmeasured courtyard represents the Romans oppressing them. In the Old Testament and other Jewish traditions, “measuring” suggests protection and preservation (see Ezekiel 40:3—42:20 and Zechariah 2:1-5). Early Christians familiar with the Old Testament would have seen in John’s action a promise that they would be protected in the final traumatic times. As God had protected their ancestors from the plagues devastating Egypt, so God would protect them from the plagues devastating the earth in the last days.

The promise of protection is the “sweetness” of the scroll (10:9). Its “bitterness” (10:9) becomes apparent as John’s vision continues. Once again, the stage darkens. When the lights come up, the scene has changed completely.

Scene 3 The Two Witnesses (11:3-13)

Two witnesses appear, speaking and acting in dramatic ways (11:4-6). After a while, a beast rising from the bottomless pit fights and kills them, to the joy of those who have been the objects of their prophetic messages. After three and one-half days, God raises the witnesses and takes them to heaven (11:7-12). The earthquake that follows kills 7000 people. Those who survive give glory to God (11:13).

Early Christians familiar with the Old Testament would have sensed similarities between the two witnesses and the ancient prophets Elijah and Elisha (1 Kings, chaps. 17–22; and 2 Kings, chaps. 1–9). They also would have recognized Jesus in the picture and would also see themselves in it as disciples of Jesus. For them, the vision would be bitter as well as sweet. God had promised that the plagues would not kill them (sweet), but the beast might (bitter)! The beast’s identity will be spelled out in later chapters. Clearly, it represents forces of evil on earth with power to kill the witnesses. For those killed by the beast, the promise of protection is that of resurrection to the heavenly world.

Protected by the promise and mindful of the exhortations of Revelation 1:1—8:5, early Christians would have been inspired to continue resisting Roman religion and ways, despite the threat of death because of their witness. They would be encour-

aged to hear that many people gave glory to God even after the death and resurrection of the two witnesses (11:13). The work of the witnesses was not in vain. The work of the early Christians would not be in vain either.

Once again, the curtain falls. Viewers sit in silence, pondering what they have seen and heard.

4. Read Revelation 11:3-13. Think back to a time when you, like the two witnesses, needed to do or say something that others might question but that you felt was right. What did you dread most? Being laughed at? Being rejected by family and friends? Being attacked verbally? Being hurt physically?

ACT 3 THE FINAL JUDGMENT BEGINS (11:15—12:17)


Scene 1 The Seventh Trumpet Blast (11:15-19)

As the curtain rises, the seventh angel blows his trumpet (11:15). Suddenly, heavenly voices boom through the theater singing a song of victory (11:15). Light shines on the heavenly throne room, where the elders sing in celebration of God's justice (11:16-19). The music fades. The curtain falls.

Scene 2 The Woman and the Dragon (12:1-17)

After a brief pause, the curtain rises and a pregnant woman appears, surrounded by the sun, moon, and stars.

5. Read Revelation 12:1-6. To help you imagine the woman in the vision, think about the experience of pregnancy. What kind of fears do mothers-to-be have? How do you suppose the woman in Revelation 12:1-6 felt as she faced the dragon, gave birth, and saw her child snatched away by God?



Two kinds of traditions are blended in the picture of the woman. One is a common Near-Eastern story in which a pregnant goddess gives birth to a divine child and is protected from a dragon trying to harm them. In Roman religion, elements of this story were featured in pictures of the emperor with the goddess Roma. The other tradition is seen in the biblical images of Mother Zion (Israel) as a pregnant woman experiencing birth pangs while awaiting the birth of the new age (Isaiah 26:16-18; 54:1; 66:7-9). She represents both the pain of the present and life-giving hope for the future.


Both traditions are blended into the colorful picture of the woman on the stage. Despite the threat of the dragon, she manages to give birth. The child is snatched and taken to God and the throne. She flees to the wilderness, to the place God has prepared for her (12:1-6).

The light on the woman momentarily fades, rising on a curious battle being waged in heaven (12:7-9). Michael and his angels defeat the dragon—also known as the ancient serpent, Satan, and the devil—and cast the dragon and its angels to earth. Suddenly, the stage goes dark.

Yet another hymn praising God's salvation echoes through the darkened theater (12:10-12). As the music fades, light rises again on the woman. Fleeing the pursuing dragon, she is given wings to fly deep into the wilderness. Frustrated and angry, the dragon directs his venom toward her children (12:17). On this note, the curtain falls.

6. This vision is complex and baffling. Can you see anything in this vision that helps you make sense of suffering and God's promise of protection?

What would early Christians have seen in this incredibly confusing vision? They probably would have seen yet another proclamation that the God of Israel, not the emperor and his court, is all-powerful and will be victorious in the battle against evil forces on earth. In the vision, the God of Israel, not the goddess Roma, protects the woman and snatches the child



from the dragon. God, not Rome, is in control. Rome's oppressive ways, pictured as the activities of the dragon, will not win the day.

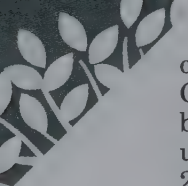
Seeing the vision, early Christians would have realized that suffering continues because evil still is present in our world. Identifying themselves as the woman's children (12:17), they would have been sobered by the birth pangs she endured and the birth pangs they could expect to endure while resisting the dragon's fierce grip in their world. At the same time, they would have been assured that their suffering was leading toward the birth of the promised day of salvation. They would have identified the child snatched to heaven as the risen and exalted Christ. The victory of the Lamb already is being celebrated in heaven. Soon that victory will be celebrated on earth as well.

God protects those who suffer by being present with them, keeping the dragon from defeating them even though they might be killed, and bringing them safely through death to life. The glimpse of the promised day when death and evil will be no more would have inspired early Christians to keep resisting all forces of evil in their present tumultuous times.

7. In Revelation, evil often is pictured as a dragon. How have you pictured evil in the course of your life? How has your picture changed over the years?

WALK THE WALK

The curtain has fallen in the middle of one act of the play. Where have we been, and where are we going? We have seen that the promise of divine protection in suffering is connected to the fight against the beast or dragon. Christians suffer and sometimes face untimely deaths because evil is real and present in the world. Yet, for us, death is not the end. God's vision of what will be continues to embrace us with life and light that will never die. God loves us into life again. The promise of protection in suffering is a call to believe God's love for us, to resist evil, and to work for well-being, security, and justice for



ourselves and all others, despite the forces stacked against God's vision for creation. We do not have to suffer as victims, but as resisters, ones confident in the promise: "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Revelation 2:10b).

8. Because life is so complicated and issues are so complex, it can be difficult to know how to suffer for resisting evil. Imagine that a friend shares with you the devastating news that her husband is an alcoholic who refuses to get treatment and sometimes hits her when he is drunk. The friend doesn't know what to do. She wonders if this is God's will, a suffering she is called to bear, or if it's her fault for angering him, or if she should leave him. Because you are friends with both the woman and her husband, you are really torn. Using Revelation's understanding of why people suffer and how we are called to respond, how would you reply to her question, "What do you think I should do?"

Secure in the Promise:

A Study of Revelation is prepared by

Women of the

Evangelical

Lutheran

Church in

America and

edited by

Catherine

Malotky.

Questions or

comments

about the

Bible study

should be

sent to

Barbara

Hofmaier,

director for

educational

resources,

Women of

the ELCA,

8765 W.

Higgins Rd.,

Chicago, IL

60631-4189.

WAIT AND WATCH IN HOPE

It is an interesting coincidence that we are probably reading these visions during the reflective days of Lent.

Sunday morning glimpses of Easter get us through the heaviness of Lent. Similarly, the heavenly victory songs interspersed through Revelation get us through the heaviness of the visions we've encountered thus far. The visions are moving somewhere. God's vision of salvation will not be stopped. Protected by the promise of God's presence and salvation, we wait and watch in hope for this Easter and the great Easter yet to come.

LOOKING AHEAD

Next month we will see more clearly the demonic forces behind Rome's rule and will hear the call to be willing to be persecuted for the promise. The study text will be Revelation 12:18–15:4. **LWT**

Gwen Sayler is associate professor of Hebrew Bible at Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa.

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Devotions during Holy Week

Nancy K. Padgett

These six devotions are offered for your reflection on the days between Palm Sunday and Easter, as we walk with Jesus on his journey to the cross and beyond. —ED.

MONDAY, MARCH 29

I know, O LORD, that the way of human beings is not in their control,

that mortals as they walk cannot direct their steps.

Correct me, O LORD, but in just measure;

not in your anger, or you will bring me to nothing.

—Jeremiah 10:23-24

Just out of college, full of optimism, she stepped into the elevator and checked her reflection in the closing doors ... a new suit and heels, no runs in her hose, and a good-hair day! Confidently, she strode to the receptionist's desk on the sixth floor.

"I am here for a 10 o'clock interview with Mr. Peterman," she announced, liking the sound of her own voice.

"I'm sorry, Miss," came the reply. "We tried to reach you. That position has already been filled."

Without a chance, without even a glance, she was dismissed from a possible future. The position was filled, as if someone else had just stepped right into her new heels and stripped away her new identity.

Disappointed and deflated, she walked out of the building toward the bus stop, anxious to get home.

"Excuse me, could you help?" came the voice of a young woman sitting with



her child by the paper stand. "We are really lost."

So she stopped to talk to the woman. She gave her directions, and then walked with them far enough to know they would find their way.

When she finally sat down on the bus, she noticed the run in her hose, and suddenly she knew without question that it was time to go home and change shoes.

Lord, we have stood confidently by, filled with your majesty, waving our palm branches and shouting, "Hosanna!" Today we pray for humility, so that in all things we will seek to serve you first, knowing you'll lead the way. Amen.

TUESDAY, MARCH 30

Therefore thus says the LORD:

*If you turn back, I will take you back,
and you shall stand before me.*

*If you utter what is precious,
and not what is worthless,
you shall serve as my mouth....*

And I will make you to this people

a fortified wall of bronze; they will fight against you, but they shall not prevail over you, for I am with you, to save you and deliver you, says the LORD.

—Jeremiah 15:19-20

Her life felt so empty as she sat in the quiet courtroom, waiting for the judge to return and declare her officially divorced. What would she do now?

Just then, she heard what sounded like howling from another courtroom. The noise grew louder, moving into the hallway just outside where she sat, accompanied by an eruption of chairs flying and guards dashing.

So, she got up and went out into the hallway, stepping into the storm. She saw the source of the chaos—another woman, with eyes clenched, arms and body flailing, and anguished cries rising and sweeping down the corridor. With a surge of strength, she moved into the path of the crazed woman.

"Do you believe in God?" she asked. And she knew in that instant that it was a question not just for the woman in front of her but for herself as well.



Immediately, the other woman collapsed in a chair, still crying, but somehow changed. So, she knelt at the woman's feet, and she spoke words that were God's gift to her.

"You are not alone," she said. "In the darkest, most frightening places, God is with you. If you dig deep, you will hear God's voice, and you will know God's peace."

Such simple words, so basic; as they passed her lips, at last she understood, and wept for joy.

O God of grace, we walk toward Golgotha wanting to avoid your death and our own. Grant us strength to step into our pain and into the pain of others, and to experience your joy and your presence even there. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 31

*Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed;
save me, and I shall be saved;
for you are my praise.*

*See how they say to me,
"Where is the word of the LORD?
Let it come!"*

*But I have not run away from being
a shepherd in your service,*

nor have I desired the fatal day.

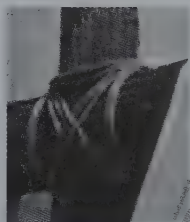
*You know what came from my lips;
it was before your face.*
—Jeremiah 17:14-16

One step forward, two steps back ... the story of her life! She faced so many things—the demands of her career, the serious illness of a dear friend, the adolescent uprisings in her household—all the pains and pressures of mid-life madness!

She felt constantly frustrated by all she wasn't accomplishing, forever spinning her wheels.

But on that day as she drove to work, she noticed him. He walked along the side of the road, carrying a cross on his back. A local character who did this every year during Holy Week, he moved silently through the neighborhood. She had certainly seen him, had even laughed about him many times, thinking him strange and extreme. Somehow today, though, she saw him differently.

This day she knew just how he felt, and she also knew he understood just how she felt. The connection she experienced at first startled, then empowered her.



In sharing the burden with him, she accepted a renewed momentum and a growing curiosity within herself. She wanted to learn more about a person who could both bear his own weight and also lift hers—and who could move, so unassumedly, across her path to heal her weary spirit.

We see your cross before us, O God, and we feel its weight upon us. Fill us with the vision and with the questions that will challenge and startle us. Amen.

THURSDAY, APRIL 1

I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word.... I am asking on their behalf. ... Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.

—from John 17:6-11

Family tradition required a feast on any special occasion. Not just a better-than-ordinary meal, but an event shared by friends, neighbors, and relatives.

But this feast was different. Trying her best to participate with her usual gusto, she couldn't help

feeling less than enthusiastic this time. It was, after all, a farewell feast for her oldest son, who was leaving home.

He wasn't headed for summer camp, having long since taken his last scouting trip. He had finished the back-and-forth of college years. This leaving was for real—a new job in a different country, with no immediate plans to return. In the midst of the celebration, she fought the pain that crept into her eyes and caught in her throat.

She felt so proud of him. She was so excited about the possibilities that awaited him. And yet, she still ached in the awareness of his coming absence. As she watched him move among the guests, she felt jealous of their enthusiasm for him, and ashamed of her own hesitancy. She had never considered herself a clingy mother, never one to grieve over his achievements!

The table was solid oak, worn soft from countless family gatherings, and she touched it now as she waited for everyone to come around it for the blessing. She knew that through the years she had opened her heart and her home and had shared with him the feast of hospitality. He had learned and



grown, listened and loved. Now, as the time to say goodbye drew near, she searched for both the wisdom to cherish and the courage to let go.

Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest. And let these gifts to us be blessed. Amen.

FRIDAY, APRIL 2

It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last.... All his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

—drawn from
Luke 23:44-49

She awoke early into oppressive darkness. Soon the rain pouring down in thick sheets sharpened her senses. As lightning flashed, the growing wind loosened the foundations of her apartment building and wound its way under doors and around windows, and then swept through her skin and up her spine.

With a sudden push of adrenaline, she raced along the corridor, banging on doors, coaxing her neighbors to huddle with her in a dark stairwell. Together they clung there as the roof blew away and the building crumbled.

When the light of day found the lonely stairwell, they rose from the rubble to witness the destruction of the night before. Fragments of their lives lay in a cluttered heap, strewn about without reason or order. Just then, she heard voices saying, "Are you all OK over there? Is anyone hurt?"

Looking around her, she knew everything had changed. She knew God was not dead in a heap of rubble and was not bound by the destruction of this world, but that God had taken the full force of the wind and had cried out against it!

She knew also that she was not dead, either, and that the empty places in her own life needn't suffocate her or consume her. With a new day, she had the open space to start afresh, and to be healed.

The darkness of this day fills us with terror, Lord. Enter into the places where we huddle in fear and give us a glimpse of



*the new life that is ours
to claim. Amen.*

SATURDAY, APRIL 3

*So Joseph took the body
and wrapped it in a clean
linen cloth and laid it in
his own new tomb, which
he had hewn in the rock.
He then rolled a great
stone to the door of the
tomb and went away. Mary
Magdalene and the other
Mary were there, sitting
opposite the tomb.*

—Matthew 27:59-61

Her birthday was coming up, and she didn't know what to do. The party was all planned, with invitations sent, and she felt excited about the coming celebration. There was just one problem. Her mom wasn't invited. Her mom didn't even know about the party at all. So, while she looked forward to the day, she dreaded it, too, wondering how she would keep the secret or if she should just go ahead and tell her mother.

The separation hadn't been too bad until now. Her parents fought a lot, and she got sick of dragging her clothes back and forth, forgetting things, or leaving things behind. Now she had two houses, though, and a bunch of cool things; and she hadn't really minded the extra

attention she was getting from both her parents these days.

But, turning 9 was becoming more complicated than she expected. The bad parts of her life pushed in sometimes and made her act in ways she didn't understand. The good things usually seemed to have a catch. Pretending she didn't care wasn't helping, either.

So here she was, the center of attention, torn between the two people she loved most in the world. What could she do?

With fear and foreboding, anticipation and excitement, she waited.

*O Lord, we sit at your
tomb, remembering your
promise, wanting to
believe. Send to us your
spirit of peace. Amen.*

LWT



*Nancy K. Padgett is the
pastor/developer for
Epiphany Lutheran in
Suwanee, Ga. She has
two children, a dog, two
cats, and some frogs.*

Psalm 121

A song of praise

Angie Erickson Brady

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help (Psalm 121:1, King James Version).

A large hill looms skyward, a half-mile from my home. Climbing until I reach its summit, I sit on a large granite rock and look over the top of box elder and oak trees to see the steeple of Rollag Church where I will be confirmed in early October.

I stand on this rock and recite Psalm 121. I hear a meadowlark and a crow in the distance. I think about God's plan for my life.

My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth (v. 2).

At age 14, when I recited that Psalm, I didn't realize this same Psalm would comfort me the rest of my life. It would help me rear four sons—each with his own thoughts and dreams.

He will not suffer thy foot to be moved; He that keepeth thee will not slumber (v. 3).

At the bedside of a sick child—God is with me. During the mental illness of another, God comforts me.

Behold he that keeps Israel shall neither slumber or sleep (v. 4).

121

I lift up mine eyes to the hills,
From whence doth my help come?
My help cometh from the Lord,
The maker of heaven and earth.
The Lord shall watch over you,
The Lord shall keep you.
Behold, my eyes are unto the Lord,
For he shall not slumber nor sleep.
The Lord shall keep you,
The Lord shall be your shade,
The Lord shall be your right hand.
The Lord shall be your shield,
The Lord shall be your right hand.
The Lord shall preserve you from all evil:
He shall preserve your soul.

"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem."
"May they prosper who love you."
Peace be within your walls,
and quietness within your towers.
"For my brethren
and companions' sake
I pray for your prosperity."
"Because of the house
of the Lord our God,
I will seek to do you good."

123

Do not turn up my eyes
to you, O Jerusalem,
for you delivered us in the heavens.
As the eyes of servants
look to the hand of their masters,
and the eyes of a maid
to the hand of her mistress,
so our eyes look to the Lord our God,
until he show us his mercy.
"Have mercy upon us, O Lord;
have mercy,
for we have had
more than enough of contention;
we must of the scorn
of the insolent men."

During the death of my child, God does not slumber or sleep.

The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand (v. 5).

My husband is comforted on his deathbed. The Lord is the shade on his right hand.

The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul (v. 7).

Psalm 121 is also woven into the wedding sermon during the 62nd year of my life.

The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even forevermore (v. 8).

From childhood to middle age and now golden age, I continue to be sheltered by the words of this song of praise. **LWT**

Angie Erickson Brady is a member at St. Peter's Lutheran in Mesa, Ariz., and an associate member of Trinity Lutheran in Pelican Rapids, Minn.



Stewards of the vision

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem!" (Zechariah 9:9) ... for your 1997 offerings totaled \$3,425,106! (See p. 42.)

What a witness your giving is of this community of women's commitment to our Lord! God's gift of Christian community is lived out through the women in your congregation, your circle, your Bible study, all of your life. The churchwide women's organization (CWO) is part of this community, and it is intimately connected to you and your gifts of time and money—gifts from God.

That connection begins with women who serve on the Churchwide Executive Board of Women of the ELCA. These women, servants like yourselves, listen to your concerns and stories, your needs and interests. They read, study, discuss, reflect, and pray for guidance—as individuals and together as your executive board. With your input, the executive board sets the policy and goals for the organization's work, which the staff then designs and carries out. The resulting program and budget planning express the churchwide organization's response to your needs and the needs of your sisters.

Meeting your needs, in light of the purpose statement (see p. 41) and the triennial theme, is central to CWO budget decision-making. These decisions are reflected in the 1997 audit figures (see p. 42).

In 1997 the churchwide organization spent 49 cents of every dollar on programs, resources, and training events. Another 28 cents supported your \$1 million gift to the ELCA. This is a gift that connects you personally—through support of the church's ministries—with women all around the world.

Another 4 cents was spent to plan the 1999 Triennial Convention. The Triennial Convention is the only event where women representative of the entire community gather to worship, engage in ministry, and promote healing and wholeness. The final 19 cents was spent on

governance and general administration expenses—the costs to manage the organization and its resources.

In 1997 the organization celebrated its 10th anniversary and began a time of transition to new leadership and revitalized programming. Exciting programs such as Katie's Fund, synodical leadership training events, a new year of Witness of Women, and redesigned theological retreats, energized the organization. In 1998 the excitement continued as the organization focused on the triennium theme, "Proclaim God's Peace."

The transition continues into 1999 as the new triennium theme, "Live God's Justice," emerges. All churchwide programs and efforts from 1999 until the 2002 convention will draw from a vision of God's Justice. As stewards of this vision we ask, "What does 'Live God's Justice' mean to Christians living in a sinful, broken world?"

Our response begins with the gifts God gives us and continues through our gifts as faithful individual women, as community, as organization, as church.

The 1999 budget (see p. 44) details how the churchwide women's organization plans to support our efforts to "Live God's Justice."

The audit and budget figures are just one way to see how the churchwide women's organization engages in ministry and action. Join your sisters in St. Louis for the Women of the ELCA Fourth Triennial Convention to learn more. At this time, the Executive Board's vision, "Live God's Justice," will be presented through resources and plans developed by staff. All the resources and programming for a coming triennium, designed to meet your needs, will be previewed at the Triennial Convention.

It's an exciting time. It's a time of renewal, commitment, and reaffirmation as Women of the ELCA works to "promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society, and the world." Thanks be to God—and to you for your faithful stewardship to and through Women of the ELCA. **LWT**

Valora Starr Butler

Director for evangelism and stewardship

Jonathan Kalkwarf

Director for finance and administration

WOMEN OF THE ELCA PURPOSE STATEMENT

*As a
community
of women
created in the
image of God,
called to
discipleship in
Jesus Christ,
and
empowered by
the Holy Spirit,
we commit
ourselves to
grow in faith,
affirm our gifts,
support one
another in
our callings,
engage in
ministry and
action, and
promote healing
and wholeness
in the church,
the society,
and the world.*

Statement of Activities for the year ending January 31, 1998

REVENUE AND SUPPORT	BUDGET	ACTUAL
CONTRIBUTED REVENUE		
Regular Offerings	\$1,300,000	\$1,178,476
Thankofferings	1,600,000	1,563,264
Designated Gifts	450,000	403,961
SWO Convention Offerings	60,000	66,201
Other Offerings	80,000	104,103
Total Offerings Available for Current Year	3,490,000	3,316,005
Offerings Restricted to Endowments		109,101
OTHER INCOME		
Triennial Convention	1,500	0
Investment/Other Income	409,260	1,108,569
Total Other Income	410,760	1,108,569
Total Revenue and Support	3,900,760	4,533,675
EXPENDITURES		
PROGRAM SERVICES		
Direct Program Expenditures	1,080,870	909,806
Communications	193,280	181,345
Lutheran Woman Today	244,200	245,579
Planned Giving	120,000	129,402
Other Program and Training Events	60,000	41,385
Grants and Scholarships	350,000	249,428
Total Program	2,048,350	1,756,945
Gift to the ELCA	1,000,000	1,000,000
MANAGEMENT AND GENERAL		
Administration	594,600	523,854
Governance	104,500	143,813
Total Administration	\$699,100	\$667,667

	BUDGET	ACTUAL
Triennial Convention	\$ 50,000	\$ 159,135
Total Expenditures	3,797,450	3,583,747

OTHER TRANSACTIONS

Triennial Convention Reserves	70,000	70,000
Other Fund Uses	33,310	879,928
Total Other Transactions	103,310	949,928

Total Expenditures and Fund Restrictions	\$3,900,760	\$4,533,675
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Statement of Financial Position for the year ending January 31, 1998

ASSETS

Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 50,300
Investments	5,922,601
Beneficial interest in outside trusts	261,772
Due from the ELCA	1,467,547
Accounts receivable and other assets	15,979
Notes receivable (net of allowance for doubtful accounts of \$35,000)	35,000
Furniture and Equipment (net of accumulated depreciation of \$43,438)	31,297
Total assets	7,784,496

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

LIABILITIES -

Account payable and accrued liabilities	146,181
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NET ASSETS:

Unrestricted	5,105,044
Temporarily restricted	1,509,028
Permanently restricted	1,024,243
Total net assets	7,638,315
Total liabilities and net assets	\$7,784,496

Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

1999 BUDGET

REVENUE AND SUPPORT	1999	1998
CONTRIBUTED INCOME	BUDGET	BUDGET
Regular Offerings	\$1,404,000	\$1,350,000
Thankofferings	1,716,000	1,650,000
Designated Gifts	445,000	450,000
SWO Convention Offerings	70,000	60,000
Other Offerings	83,200	80,000
Total Offerings Available for Current Expenses	3,718,200	3,590,000
Total Other Contributed Income Restricted to Endowments	151,000	51,000
Triennial Convention	830,000	1,500
Investment/Other Income	590,000	358,260
Total Other Income	1,420,000	359,760
Total Revenue and Support	5,289,200	4,000,760
Venture Funding	188,000	0
Total Income and Funding Required	5,477,200	4,000,760

ANTICIPATED EXPENDITURES

PROGRAM SERVICES

Direct Program Services	1,047,586	1,062,760
Communication	242,009	197,070
Lutheran Woman Today	268,383	246,050
Planned Giving	163,615	120,000
Other Program and Training Events	58,000	60,000
Grants and Scholarships	201,200	304,200
Total Program Expenses	1,980,793	1,990,080

MANAGEMENT AND GENERAL

Governance	120,500	90,000
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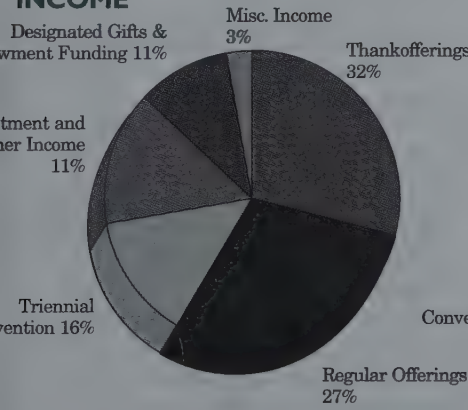
Administrative	\$ 624,516	\$ 615,020
Total Administration	745,016	705,020
Triennial Convention	1,731,178	100,000
Gift to the ELCA	1,000,000	1,000,000
Total Expenditures	5,456,987	3,795,100

OTHER TRANSACTIONS

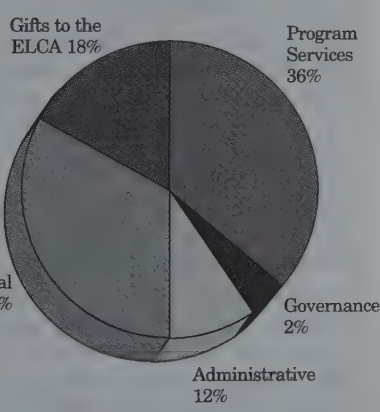
Triennial Convention Reserves	0	250,000
Venture Funding	188,000	0
Other Fund Uses	(167,787)	(44,340)
Total Other Transactions	20,213	205,660

Total Expenditures and Other Transactions	\$5,477,200	\$4,000,760
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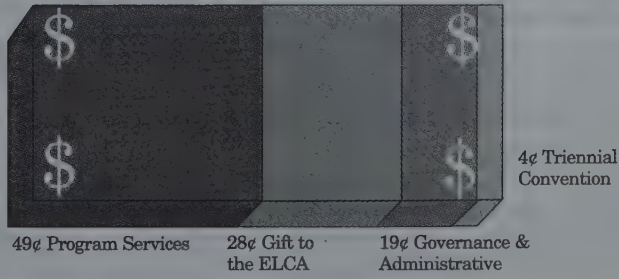
1998 BUDGETED INCOME



1999 BUDGETED EXPENSES



1998 DOLLAR DISTRIBUTION





Speaking of triennial convention

Convention-going, Women of the ELCA style, means hearing from speakers on the cutting edge of living out the convention theme. The 1999 triennial convention, with its theme of "Live God's Justice," will live up to this expectation.

In St. Louis we'll hear from civil-rights activist Myrlie Evers-Williams, former U.S. senator Paul Simon, and Frances Hesselbein, an expert in leadership and volunteerism. Each one of these people is powerful and empowering in the area of living justly. Each, in a unique way, has shown what it means to "do justice and to love kindness, and to walk humbly" with God. Let me share with you a little more about Frances Hesselbein.

In 1976 Frances Hesselbein rose from the ranks of volunteer troop leader to become Chief Executive Officer of the Girl Scouts of America. It was a time when the Girl Scouts needed fresh, innova-

tive, and courageous leadership. During Hesselbein's time as CEO, the Girl Scouts tripled its number of non-white members, and overall membership soared as well. At the same time, the Girl Scout organization's leadership was transformed. The changes were marked by key elements of true leadership—openness to innovation, willingness to share responsibility, and respect for diversity. These made a lasting difference in the organization and in the lives of every girl and woman who participates.

Hesselbein continues to be a powerful influence nationally and internationally as she leads the Peter F. Drucker Foundation for Nonprofit Management and in consultation with leaders in business, government, church, and social sectors. In 1998 the United States recognized her contributions with its highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Frances Hesselbein is planning to come to St. Louis a day before she speaks and spend that time informally with us. She is a sister in Christ who loves kindness and who walks humbly with our Lord. Out of that have come the skills and strength to do justice through the transformation of both persons and institutions. If you have the opportunity to meet her, I know you'll be as delighted as I was to make her acquaintance.

*Catherine I. H. Braasch
Executive Director
Women of the ELCA*

P.S. If your company or profession requires you to complete continuing

education, let your employer know that Women of the ELCA is offering Continuing Education Units for the first time in 1999. Each of our speakers—Frances Hesselbein, Myrlie Evers-Williams, and former

senator Paul Simon—have a message that's of value to corporations and civic society, as well as to churches. Consider making triennial convention 1999 part of your professional continuing education plan.

OFFICIAL NOTICE

Fourth Triennial Convention Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Notice is hereby given that the Fourth Triennial Convention of Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America will be held in St. Louis, Mo., at the America's Center, July 8-11, 1999.

Delegate registration will begin at 2 p.m. (Central Daylight Time) on Wednesday, July 7. Delegate orientation will be held at 3 p.m. on Wednesday, July 7, 1999.

Registration for Triennial Convention participants who are not delegates also will begin at 2 p.m. on Wednesday, July 7. Participant orientation is scheduled at 3 p.m. and at 8 p.m. on Wednesday, July 7 in the convention center. (Participants may attend either session.)

The convention will open and close with worship. The opening worship service will begin at 8:30 a.m. on Thursday, July 8. The closing worship service will conclude at noon on Sunday, July 11. To request Triennial Convention registration information, call 800-638-3522, ext. 2471 (773-380-2471 after business hours).

A Women of Color Gathering will precede the convention, meeting on July 5-7, 1999. For more information about the Women of Color Gathering, please call 800-638-3522, ext. 2428 or ext. 2746.

Participants are encouraged to join delegates and other Women of the ELCA to "Live God's Justice" at the Fourth Triennial Convention of Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

*Donna Haack, secretary
Women of the ELCA
Churchwide Executive Board*

Underlines

WAYS TO USE LWT

Ever read an article in LWT and think to yourself, "Now there's a good idea! I have to remember to bring that up at the next circle meeting"? Or have you found yourself using the magazine for a devotion or program idea?

With the inauguration of the "Underlines" column (in every other issue of LWT), we aim to share ideas for getting the most out of your LWT reading. Each column will draw from articles in the current and the preceding issue to offer ideas for programs and retreats, recommend titles for further reading, or suggest other ways to help you and your women's group use LWT.

In the **January/February 1999** issue, did you underline the important suggestions and questions for Bible study groups? Bible study groups will find it helpful to discuss "The communion of saints: Bible study in the flesh," by Catherine Malotky (pp. 14-16)—especially the section "What's your style?"

How about making some time early in your group's study of *Secure in the Promise* to discuss and decide together the "to prepare or not prepare" question?

Another idea: Allot time in your March meeting to have members individually complete the Bible study survey in the March *IdeaNet*. This might be a good occasion to

think about inviting new groups to form for summer Bible study.

Barbara Rossing's article on the millennium in the **January/February** issue ("For such a time as this," pp. 2-6) would make an excellent basis for a program. Ask participants to bring in end-times cartoons, ads, newspaper or magazine articles, and other end-times information (and misinformation) that they've run across. How might you and your women's group seize the millennial moment to "Live God's Justice"?

Are there people in your congregation who are providing daily care for a family member? Two articles in the **March 1999** issue may have special meaning for them: David L. Miller's "Holy labor of love" and Terence E. Fretheim's "God and the meaning of suffering." What a blessing it would be if caregivers could gather for mutual support, using one or both of these articles as a basis for discussion. Respite care provided by circle or congregation members would make it easier for caregivers to attend.

A clipping ministry is another way to give a second life to LWT articles that you have found meaningful. A few members could make a commitment to clip out practical or inspirational articles and send them with a prayer and a note to those with special burdens. ("Holy labor of love" may be just the right article for a caregiver you know.)

Blessings!

Barbara Hofmaier
Director for educational resources
Women of the ELCA

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LWT EDITORIAL OFFICE

Women of the ELCA

8765 West Higgins Road

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fax 773-380-2419

email: lwt@elca.org

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